

Navy and many others. Led by NOAA, the program supports government and university-based research to improve severe weather forecasts and better utilization by emergency managers as well as the public.

This legislation authorizes \$46.5 million over three years and emphasizes research on hurricanes and heavy precipitation events through better observations and modeling. Another important goal for the program will be to improve the communication between weather forecasters and the public and emergency managers when it is needed most. The bill also provides for the development of centers where research can be tested in real life environments to more quickly move research and new technology into operation—and save lives in the process.

I look forward to working with the agencies involved in this program, the research community, and my colleagues to pass this important legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS TO MR. RICHARD BIOLSI

HON. PATRICK J. TOOMEY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to offer congratulations and thanks to Mr. Richard Biolsi, Chief Operating Officer of KidsPeace, one of America's most comprehensive children's mental health charities which is headquartered in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania.

Rich is retiring this year after 34 years of dedicated service to America's youth. Over that span, Rich has served as a social worker, Vice President for Programs, Executive Vice-President for Programs, interim Chief Executive Officer, and Chief Operating Officer for KidsPeace.

When he began his career with KidsPeace in 1969, the fledgling service organization was caring for only 35 children in a run-down home with very few resources. Now, 34 years later, KidsPeace directly cares for nearly 3,000 children at more than 50 centers across the country. What once was a single-home orphanage for children in the Lehigh Valley has become one of the most comprehensive children's mental health charities in the nation that has helped millions of children in every state of our nation, on overseas military bases, and in 70 foreign countries.

Many of these accomplishments, in no small part, can be attributed to Rich's efforts and strategic organizational leadership. From the development of six major residential campuses in four states, the establishment of the KidsPeace Hospital, and the creation of a unique and effective foster care program that provides homes for children in crisis in nine states, Rich has been an integral component of KidsPeace's success.

Rich's accomplishments extend well beyond the borders of KidsPeace. In 2001, he was named Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers. KidsPeace estimates that during his distinguished career, Rich and the programs he has created and overseen have directly cared for nearly 80,000 children in emotional crisis.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the outstanding dedication of Mr. Richard

Biolsi to America's most vulnerable children. His commitment to excellence has enriched the lives of each of the children he cared for. I offer congratulations on his outstanding career, and the thanks of a grateful nation.

TRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF 21 NORTHWEST MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICTS

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements of 21 Northwest Missouri School Districts that have received the State's Distinction in Performance Award. The Distinction in Performance Award is designed to be an incentive for School Districts to focus on improving academic achievement. The criteria for the award, established by the State Board of Education, requires that the School Districts meet certain performance standards in the Missouri Assessment Program test scores, ACT test scores, attendance and dropout rates, and other academic performance records.

Of the 524 Public School Districts in the State of Missouri, 157 were given accolades for their achievements in 2002. Twenty-one School Districts in the 6th District were honored with this distinctive award and are as follows: Avenue City School District, Chillicothe School District, Cowgill School District, Galatin School District, Grundy County School District, Jefferson School District, Lathrop School District, Mound City School District, Mid-Buchanan School District, Nodaway-Holt School District, North Platte School District, Pattonsburg School District, Platte County School District, Rock Port School District, Savannah School District, South Harrison School District, Stanberry School District, Tri-County School District, West Platte County School District, Winston School District, and Worth County School District.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring these exceptional School Districts for their dedications to and achievement in educating the children of the 6th District.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO: LA PLATA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to recognize the La Plata County Sheriff's Office for their service and dedication during one of Colorado's most formidable fire seasons. Last summer, the LPCSO played an integral role in containing the Missionary Ridge forest fire that burned over 70,000 acres in Southwestern Colorado. Today, I would like to pay tribute to their heroic efforts before this body of Congress and this nation.

When the Missionary Ridge fire first erupted last June, the citizens of Durango, Bayfield and the surrounding communities called upon the La Plata County Sheriff's Office to protect

their loved ones, homes, and communities from what would become the worst fire in area history. The fire began in a ditch beside Missionary Ridge Road, just 15 miles northeast of Durango, and grew to consume more than 70,000 acres, 56 residences, and 27 outbuildings.

Although the Missionary Ridge fire was a devastating reminder of how destructive forest fires can be, it also served to remind us of the men and women who risk their lives to protect their fellow citizens on a daily basis. The roots of the La Plata County Sheriff's Office reach back to 1871, when Sheriff Joseph W. Wallace was solely responsible for law enforcement in the county. Today, the Sheriff's Office has 100 employees under the supervision of Sheriff Duke Schirard. During the Missionary Ridge Fire, the La Plata County Sheriff's Office turned their resources to numerous emergency activities that include alerting citizens and evacuating them from threatened roadways and properties, assisting the coordination of emergency services, and acting as real-time fire spotters. The LPCSO maintained traffic control for a 40-mile section along the fire's perimeter. Their personnel brought food and supplies to firefighters on the fire line and provided personnel to man checkpoints and fire lines. The over 2000 hours of overtime logged by the LPCSO illustrate the dedication and readiness with which these men and women serve the citizens of La Plata County.

Mr. Speaker, it is with sincere admiration that I recognize the La Plata County Sheriff's Office before this body of Congress and this nation. I want to commend all of the employees of the La Plata County Sheriff's Office for their determination, courage, and resolve during last summer's efforts on Missionary Ridge. Without the help of the La Plata County Sheriff's Office and others, the added devastation to our community, environment, and quality of life would have been unimaginable. Their tireless commitment throughout the summer's exhaustive fire season has served as an inspiration to us all, and it is an honor to represent such an outstanding group of Americans in this Congress.

TRIBUTE TO SURENKUMAR S. DESAI

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Surenkumar S. Desai of Madison County, Mississippi. Mr. Desai was serving as the Ward 3 Alderman in Canton, Mississippi at the time of his passing.

Mr. Desai immigrated to the United States from India in 1981, and was proud to be an American while still embracing his Indian heritage. In 1982, Mr. Desai moved to Mississippi and worked at a local drive-in restaurant. Two years later, he was transferred to the City of Canton to serve as the manager of another drive-in restaurant within the same chain.

Mr. Desai became an American citizen in 1992, and developed a keen interest in local politics thereafter. Mr. Desai campaigned several times serve as an elected official in the capacity of Mayor of Canton and Madison County District 1 Supervisory to no avail. However, his persistence paid off and in December